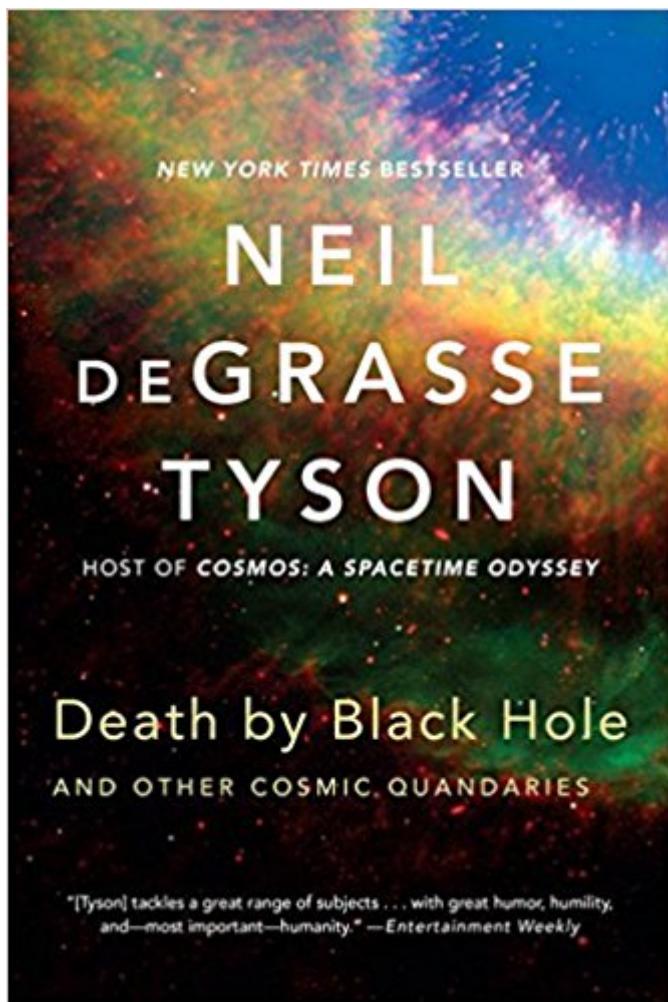


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# Death By Black Hole: And Other Cosmic Quandaries



## Synopsis

“[Tyson] tackles a great range of subjects . . . with great humor, humility, and most important humanity.” Entertainment Weekly Loyal readers of the monthly “Universe” essays in Natural History magazine have long recognized Neil deGrasse Tyson’s talent for guiding them through the mysteries of the cosmos with clarity and enthusiasm. Bringing together more than forty of Tyson’s favorite essays, *Death by Black Hole?* explores a myriad of cosmic topics, from what it would be like to be inside a black hole to the movie industry’s feeble efforts to get its night skies right. One of America’s best-known astrophysicists, Tyson is a natural teacher who simplifies the complexities of astrophysics while sharing his infectious fascination for our universe.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What would it feel like if your spaceship were to venture too close to the black hole lurking at the center of the Milky Way? According to astrophysicist Tyson, director of New York City’s Hayden Planetarium, size does matter when it comes to black holes, although the chances of your surviving the encounter aren’t good in any case. Tyson takes readers on an exciting journey from Earth’s hot springs, where extremophiles flourish in hellish conditions, to the frozen, desolate stretches of the Oort Cloud and the universe’s farthest reaches, in both space and time. Tyson doesn’t restrict his musings to astrophysics, but wanders into related fields like relativity and particle physics, which he explains just as clearly as he does Lagrangian points, where we someday may park interplanetary fueling stations. He tackles popular myths (is the sun yellow?) and takes movie

directors—most notably James Cameron—to task for spectacular goofs. In the last section the author gives his take on the hot subject of intelligent design. Readers of *Natural History* magazine will be familiar with many of the 42 essays collected here, while newcomers will profit from Tyson's witty and entertaining description of being pulled apart atom by atom into a black hole, and other, closer-to-earth, and cheerier, topics. 9 illus. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Whenever astronomy intrudes on the news, interviewers flock to the telegenic Tyson for an explanation. The high-profile astrophysicist is also an essayist for *Natural History*, the American Museum of Natural History's monthly that is the source for this volume. His pieces are organized under whimsical banners such as "All the ways the cosmos wants to kill us," and Tyson's style will connect with general readers who are interested in the form the apocalypse will take. Scientists know that in a few billion years, an expanding sun will vaporize the earth, provided it's not been previously destroyed by a rogue black hole. Besides regaling spooky stories, the selections deploy movies as an astronomy popularizer, with Tyson critiquing the accuracy of the sky depicted in various scenes. Elsewhere, topics in the history of astronomy and physics fall into two categories: essays about the discovery of physical laws, and about cosmic objects such as galactic gas clouds and quasars. Whatever readers' scientific tastes, something in Tyson's wide-ranging collection will sate them. Gilbert TaylorCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Really enjoyed reading this book. Not spellbinding but definitely held my attention more than I expected. This is my first time to read any book on astronomy or the sciences that was not assigned. I will re-read for information and content now.

I liked it a lot. The way it is written like you are chatting with the renowned astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson is very appealing. He uses a language and vocabulary accessible to most of the people who graduated highschool. Also the examples he gives are simple and easy to understand. I would like to see a revised version of this book, one that includes the discoveries from the latest years.

If you've seen Dr. Tyson on tv or Youtube videos, and liked him, you'll really enjoy this book. A

collection of essays, really that transition one to another smoothly. Dr. Tyson put the science of the heavens into something digestible for me. And, as he does when he speaks, his writing is liberally sprinkled with his humor. Well worth the time to read.

I could actually hear Tysons voice reading this to me. His wit and passion shine through, and make even the most confusing principles and theories fun to learn about.

A bit deep in some places, but quite clear in others. Well worth the time to read and digest and maybe acquire a better understanding of what we think we know versus the still unknown.

Could have been named "The Essential Tyson ". If you only read one of his books, make it this one. It is a compilation of the subjects of his talks, writings, radio shows, etc assembled into a coherent flow heavily seasoned with wit and humor....and you can learn something.

DEATH BY BLACK HOLE is a good book. Neil deGrasse Tyson is among America's leading astrophysicists, and certainly its most successful in communicating to nonspecialists. In very readable prose, he takes us through a Cook's tour of our solar system, starting with the various revolts among astronomers that took us away from an Earth-centered universe toward a sun-centered one (heliocentrism), then toward our modern understanding of the solar system as nowhere near the center of our galaxy (the Milky Way) that is nowhere near the center of the billions of galaxies that constitute the known universe. My personal favorite chapters in this book are the interior ones where Tyson unveils his specialty, spectroscopy, and shows how it has determined that most of our known elements and no small amount of chemical compounds (like ammonia) were born in the process of fusion in the largest stars (far larger than our own "dwarf") that then went super- or hypernova, scattering these elements -- to get a little fanciful -- to the solar winds and eventually to us. But here's the problem that makes DEATH BY BLACK HOLE merely a good book, not a near-great one: it was based on columns Tyson wrote for a journal that apparently ran at greater intervals than the couple of chapters even the most casual reader will go through in an evening. There was no editing out of re-taught facts and theories, so the reader is exposed to a good deal of "Previously, on DEATH BY BLACK HOLE," when a little trimming and redaction would have saved this glitch from happening. Also, by the book's concluding chapters we start to hear more about Tyson's thoughts on how we non-specialists should approach the cosmos. He is well equipped to do this, and welcome to do this, but nonetheless the topic of this book has edged out of

'Cosmic Quandaries' into social and educational quandaries of the author's delineation. Therefore, what should have been a five-star book becomes a four-star collection of columns in book form.

Loved the enthusiastic approach Neil has to his subject and the way he calmly explains to us mortals and neophytes the way our world works.

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